

Good afternoon, and welcome to you all.

Today's oversight hearing is the third in our series on the nation's missile defense program.

As I've noted before, the National Security Oversight Subcommittee is undertaking this extensive and sustained oversight of missile defense for three primary reasons.

First, the Missile Defense Agency operates the largest research development program in the Department of Defense, consisting currently of about \$10 billion a year. Since the 1980s, taxpayers have already spent \$120 to \$150 billion – more time and more money than we spent on the Manhattan project or the Apollo program, with no end in sight.

Second, the broader history of missile defense efforts teaches us important lessons. The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service put it this way:

[E]fforts to counter ballistic missiles have been underway since the dawn of the missile age at the close of World War II. Numerous programs were begun, and only a very few saw completion to deployment. Technical obstacles have proven to be tenacious, and systems integration challenges have been more the norm, rather than the exception.

Third, the excellent analysis and work of those who testified at our previous two hearings – and others like them – have raised very serious concerns about the effectiveness, efficiency, and even the need for our country's current missile defense efforts.

Today, we'll continue these conversations with the head of the Missile Defense Agency. General Obering, I want to thank you for your service to our country and for participating in today's hearing.

For your benefit – and for others who weren't able to attend our other hearings – I wanted to provide a short recap of what we learned and what serious questions have been raised.

Our first hearing focused on the threats facing our country from intercontinental ballistic missiles versus other vulnerabilities we face – a discussion which should form the foundation for any wise policy making, but that too often gets ignored, distorted, or manipulated.

Joseph Cirincione testified, and I quote:

The threat [the United States faces from ballistic missiles] has steadily declined over the past 20 years. There are fewer missiles in the world today than there were 20 years ago, fewer states with missile programs, and fewer hostile missiles aimed at the United States. Countries still pursuing long-range missile programs are fewer in number and less technologically advanced than 20 years ago.

Mr. Cirincione also dissected the threat our troops and allies face from short- and medium-range missiles versus the threat – or lack thereof – the U.S. homeland faces from long-range missiles.

Dr. Stephen Flynn, currently a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and formerly the director and principal author of the Hart-Rudman Commission report, testified that the “non-missile risk ... is far greater than the ballistic missile threat” because “it is the only realistic option for a non-state actor like al Qaeda to pursue;” it provides anonymity, something a ballistic missile simply cannot; and there are “a rich menu of non-missile options to exploit for getting a nuclear weapon into the United States” – options which could have the additional bonus, from the al Qaeda perspective, of generating “cascading economic consequences by disrupting global supply chains.”

This comparative threat assessment is nothing new. In fact, in 2000 the CIA itself came to the same conclusion, and I quote: “U.S. territory is probably more likely to be attacked with weapons of mass destruction from non-missile delivery means (most likely from non-state entities) than by missiles.”

Dr. Flynn concluded the hearing by basically begging us to use any crumbs that could be taken from the billions of dollars we lavish on our ICBM missile defense efforts to plug existing and dangerously urgent homeland security vulnerabilities.

Our second hearing tackled head-on the questions of what are the prospects of our current missile defense efforts and at what costs.

One of the most eminent physicists our country has ever produced, Dr. Richard Garwin – the 2003 recipient of the National Medal of Science from President Bush – testified, and I quote:

Should a state be so misguided as to attempt to deliver nuclear weapons by ICBM, they could be guaranteed against intercept in midcourse by the use of appropriate countermeasures.

Phillip Coyle, the longest serving director ever of the Defense Department's testing and evaluation office, testified, and I quote:

Decoys and countermeasures are the Achilles Heel of missile defense|. From a target discrimination point of view, during the past five years the flight intercept tests have been simpler and less realistic than the tests in the first five years. None of the GMD flight intercept tests have included decoys or countermeasures during the past five years|. In the past five years there have been just two successful GMD flight intercept tests. At this rate, it would take the Missile Defense Agency 50 years before they could be ready for realistic operational testing.

Other witnesses referred to a recent report by the Government Accountability Office that concluded, and I quote:

GAO was unable to assess whether MDA met its overall performance goal because there have not been enough flight tests to provide a high confidence that the models and simulations accurately predict BMDS [Ballistic Missile Defense System] performance. Moreover, the tests that have been done do not provide enough information for DOD's independent test organization to fully assess the BMDS's suitability and effectiveness.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that assuming the Missile Defense Agency continues on its present course, the taxpayers will spend an additional \$213 to \$277 billion dollars between now and 2025.

I need to stress that this is in addition to the \$150 billion we have already spent.

In a time of economic hardship, budget deficits, and many pressing and expensive challenges – both foreign and domestic – we need to all ask ourselves – whether you’re a conservative Republican or a liberal Democrat – are we wisely spending the taxpayers’ money here; is there a real threat we are trying to guard against; and are we actually going to have something useful at the end of the day?

That is why we are here today.